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INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 3167
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 1693
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 1373
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 000087

SIPDIS

NEA/ARP, NEA/I

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [KU](#)
SUBJECT: KUWAITI MPS SIFT THROUGH GAZA RUBBLE

REF: A. KUWAIT 0058
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 0034
[1](#)C. 2008 KUWAIT 1166

Classified By: Political Counselor Pete O'Donohue for reasons 1.4 b and d

Kuwaiti MPs to Call on Khaled Mesha'al

[1](#)1. (U) Amid ongoing calls to grill the PM, wrangling over KDOW, and rumors of pending constitutional or unconstitutional dissolution by the Amir, the Kuwaiti parliament, keeping Gaza at the forefront, managed to limp through another session January 27-28. Per ref A, Gaza continues to be the sole unifying cause of the obstreperous MPs, and a non-official delegation comprised of Islamists traveled January 29 to Damascus reportedly to meet with HAMAS leader Khaled Mesha'al and other senior leadership from the organization to show solidarity and support for the "moral steadfastness of the Palestinians." Leading the delegation was political gadfly MP Dr. Walid Al-Tabtabaei and fellow Islamist MP Dr. Nasser Al-Sane, a member of the Islamic Constitutional Movement, AKA Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood. Both MPs have called for official and non-official visits to Gaza to show solidarity with Palestinians.

Showing Solidarity with Palestinians

[1](#)2. (U) Reported widely in the press were accounts of Al-Tabtabaei's January 23 sojourn to Gaza in which he accompanied a Kuwaiti humanitarian assistance team. According to Al-Tabtabaei, his convoy was denied access through the Rafah crossing, so he made calls into Gaza requesting permission to enter via the network of tunnels. He recounted for the press the difficulties he subsequently encountered navigating the 200 meter tunnel, intermittently having to crawl, gasping for breath, and facing obstacles that had to be removed. Al-Tabtabaei claims to be the first Arab MP to visit Gaza. While there, he met with Palestinian MPs at HAMAS parliamentary headquarters and attended a financial affairs committee meeting.

Comment: A Rebel With Many Causes

[1](#)3. (C) Al-Tabtabaei, pictured burning an Israeli flag on our website <http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Kuwa> it, is no stranger to headlines or political theatrics. He has starred in several (Israeli) flag burning rallies and is a regular proponent of grilling the Prime Minister for a variety of reasons. He has exploited several causes to attack the GOK and rally support, including domestic worker abuses and the allowing of a controversial Shi'a imam into the country (he opposed it), but the plight of the Gazans has provided him a new platform. The level of Al-Tabtabaei's influence over his fellow MPs and other Kuwaitis is unclear,

but his astute manipulation of causes attracts a great deal of attention to himself and the GOK shortcomings (as he portrays them). His critique of the lack of GOK's inaction over Gaza and his demonization of Abu Mazen (while offering him his shoe) resonated well with the local press and with the Al-Tabtabaei political support base. Al-Tabtabaei's foray to Gaza is particularly galling to the GOK because of the positive attention that it draws to HAMAS, which contradicts the recently (January 19-20 Arab Economic Summit) re-stated GOK support for the Palestinian Authority. End comment.

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